

The Builder.

No. CCCXXXVI.

SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1849.



ON Thursday, the 12th. inst., the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes held their annual meeting at Willis's Rooms, St. James's, when Lord Ashley presided, and a fair audience assembled to hear what progress had been made since the last anniversary. On that occasion, it will be remembered, Prince Albert, who was in the chair, made a speech which spread with electrical rapidity over the kingdom, quickening good impulses, inducing kind feelings, prompting noble acts. We went into the hall of the Freemasons' Tavern (where the meeting was held) accidentally; the president was speaking, and his words ring in our ears even now. "You may depend upon it," said he, "that the interests of often-contrasted classes are identified, and it is only ignorance which prevents their uniting for each other's advantage. To dispel that ignorance—to show how man can help man, notwithstanding the complicated state of civilized society, ought to be the aim of every philanthropic person; but it is more peculiarly the duty of those who, under the blessing of Divine Providence, enjoy station, wealth, and education. Let them be careful, however, to avoid any dictatorial interference with labour and employment, which frightens away capital, destroys that freedom of thought and independence of action which must remain to every one if he is to work out his own happiness, and impairs that confidence under which alone engagements for mutual benefit are possible. God has created man imperfect, and left him with many wants, as it were to stimulate each to individual exertion, and to make them all feel that it is only by united exertions and combined action that these imperfections can be supplied, and these wants satisfied;" and this the Prince said so earnestly that if it were not the honest, real conviction and sentiment of his heart, it was so much like it that every other heart responded to it and admitted its force.

Since then the society has not been idle, as was shown by the report on Thursday;* they have commenced a block of new Model Houses for 48 families in Streatham-street, Bloomsbury; and with the view of showing how old and ill-arranged buildings may be renovated and fitted up, although not in such a way as to attain the standard of accommodation suppleable in new buildings, still, to effect a great improvement upon the existing state of things,—they have formed a lodging-house for men out of what

were three tenements, in Charles-street, Drury-lane; and one for women at 76, Hatton-garden.

The tenements in Charles-street were taken at a rent of 45*l.* per annum, were thrown into one house, the greater part of the yard was covered over and formed into a living room, and a scullery and offices, with a bath, were added—the whole of which, together with the fittings, furniture, &c., cost 1,163*l.* The tenants pay 4*d.* for each night, but if they remain a week, 2*s.* (the society do not profess to lower the ordinary price, but to improve the character of dwellings); and it seems that this has been the most profitable of their undertakings.

We annex a plan of the house in Hatton Garden as it originally stood, and another as altered, for the use of parties wishing to make similar adaptations.

Of the model houses in Streatham-street, designed by Mr. H. Roberts, the society's honorary architect, we give a view, serving to show as well the number of floors as the appearance of the building, a plan of the ground-floor, and one, on a larger scale, of a tenement or set of apartments.

In undertaking to provide in one pile of building for the accommodation of a large number of families, amongst the most important considerations was that of preserving the domestic privacy and independence of each distinct family, and so disconnecting their apartments as effectually to prevent the communication of contagious diseases: this, it will be seen, on reference to the plan, is accomplished by dispensing altogether with separate staircases and other internal communications between the different stories, and by adopting one common open staircase lead-

ing into galleries or corridors, open on one side to a spacious quadrangle, and on the other side having the outer doors of the several tenements, the rooms of which are protected from draught by a small entrance lobby. The galleries are supported next the quadrangle by a series of arcades, each embracing two stories in height, and the slate floors of the intermediate galleries rest on iron beams, which also carry the inclosure railing. The tenements being thus rendered separate dwellings, and having fewer than seven windows in each, it is hoped that they will not be liable to the window duty,—that abominable tax on light, health, architectural fitness, and morality.

The question of rendering the building fire-proof had much consideration, and a plan was finally adopted to secure this. The floors and roofs of the houses are to be rendered fire-proof by arching with hollow bricks slightly wedge-shaped, 6 inches high and 4 inches wide on the top part.

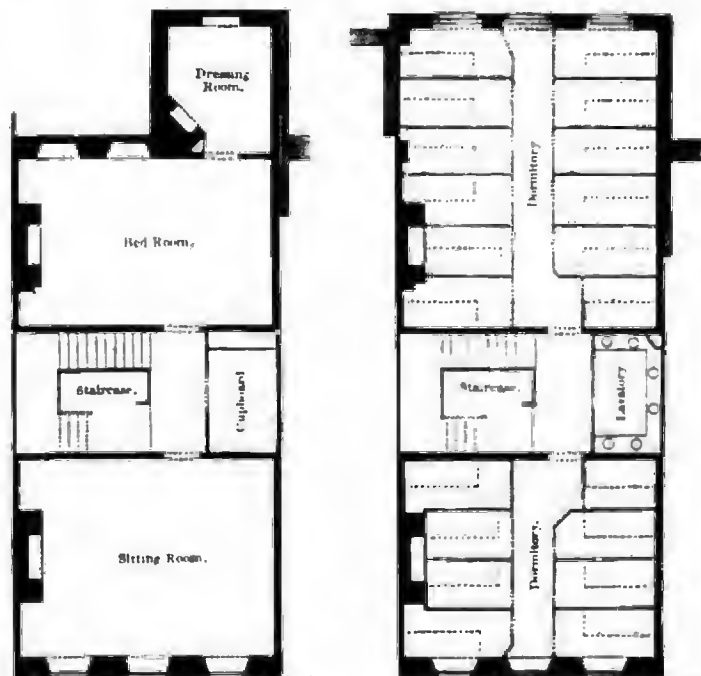
The rise of the arches will be from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 1 inch per foot on the span, and they will be set in cement. The arrangement of the building is such as to render these arches a continued series of abutments to each other, excepting at the extremities, where they will be tied in with iron rods. The floors of all the bed-rooms will be boarded.

The tenders for the erection of this building, which we gave a few weeks since, show it is to be erected with the fire-proof floors and roof for 7,370*l.*, and that the extra cost of the fire-proof construction will be only 42*l.*, or about 12*s.* per hundred pounds.

The plan fully describes the general arrangement of the principal floor; and that in the

MODEL LODGING-HOUSE, HATTON-GARDEN,

To accommodate Fifty-Seven Single Women.



First Floor of the House when taken by the Society.

First Floor of the House when enlarged and fitted up.

* Lord Ashley, in the course of his opening address, while impressing on all the fact that it repudiated all idea of being a charitable association, however beneficial it might prove to those it aided in their endeavours to improve their physical and moral condition stated that the example of this society was not only being imitated, as a model, in numerous towns throughout this country, but on the continent as well. That the President of the French Republic had contributed 3,000*l.* in aid of such efforts at Paris, and that he had himself been consulted by a member of the Prussian Government as to the improvement of dwellings at Berlin. His lordship then entered into some painful details as to the present state of the dwellings of the poorer classes, and assured the meeting that one of the most certain results of his experience as a member of the Board of Health, was the conviction that overcrowding in such dwellings was one of the most powerful predisposing causes of the scourge so unhappily prevalent. In the report which was then read, it was stated that a committee for the improvement of the cottages of agricultural labourers had been formed at Tunbridge Wells, and that the society's committee had agreed to provide 400*l.*, in instalments of 50*l.*, in aid of this object, so that they had a prospect of the plans of the society in this respect being immediately carried into effect.